

Interview with Suzanne Swanson

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Foreign Service Spouse Series

SUZANNE SWANSON

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on Tuesday, July 18, 1989. I'm interviewing Suzanne Swanson at my home in Washington. Suzanne has served in Brasilia and Manila and now in Washington. During her tour in Manila she was CLO and I think the emphasis of our interview today will be to explore her experiences as CLO.

SWANSON: I talk so fast, I hope ...

Q: No, that's okay. That won't bother it at all. (Discussion re: defective tapes). Anyway, we're discussing the direct communication with spouses program, project, whatever you want to call it, which came out when you were CLO and when I was CLO too. I found it to be less than successful in a very small Embassy, and I think it's interesting that you have the same reaction from your large Embassy. You were telling me how you tried to keep your spouses abreast of ...

SWANSON: Okay. It had been going on by the time I was CLO ... the Direct Communication with Spouses Program has been around as long as I've been in the Foreign Service, the past six years, I would say because I remember hearing about it shortly after I got to post in Brasilia, and then again it became more of an impetus to hear about it when I got to Manila. Then I became CLO. I knew about the system, and I knew

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how it worked. They would send cables out saying, "We need updated information for the Direct Communication of Spouses program." They were trying to streamline the process. At that time, as you may have already experienced, it was very bureaucratic and wound up in a lot of paper work. They had to streamline out a lot of the information. They had names of people that were no longer at post, and they had no way of following up on them, or these people had completely dropped out of sight, or they were never there in the first place. There were a lot of problems that they had to work out.

So what they were asking for was an updated list, that they would only work from this list. Only those most interested in the program would be included in it. The problem I had with this program, from my point of view, was I wasn't sure what the real aim of it was. If it was to help people find more jobs when they got home, to keep them abreast of Foreign Service life in general, or a little bit of everything. I came to the conclusion that it was the latter, the final thing. So what I did was, I sent into CLO Corner, the newsletter that Manila had, that they needed this information. This is your last chance type of thing, very dramatic. I did get quite a few inquiries and what I found was interesting was most people did not have any idea what it was about. Some people had heard about it, or said it was in the back of their brain. Several ladies who were real firecrackers, real go-getters, and were perked by this, came in, got the information, filled it out and sent it back. The interesting thing was that two of those ladies got that same information returned to them, and were told by FLO that they were very, very sorry, but they could not be included in the program because they were Military spouses.

Q: Oh, no!

SWANSON: That was another big problem with the whole thing. Military spouses encompassed too much and I can see where FLO was in a tight bind because it (the military) encompasses so many numbers of people, and they are so much more difficult to keep track of than the Foreign Service spouses. Then it became something I had to delineate. Only if you fall into these categories are you eligible for it. It was a very

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interesting experience because when they got them back they came into my office to tell me. They said, “oh, I thought you'd want to know that I'm not eligible for this.” They took it in stride, but were miffed at the same time. “Why have it if not everyone can participate?” and that's something every CLO tries to keep at post, is a sense of bridging all the differences and keeping everybody happy. I'll remember that most about the Direct Communication with Spouses because it turned out to be a little disappointing for those real gung-ho ladies that turned it in. Not that many turned it in at all because when I came back for the conference Michael Ann approached me about it. She said, “I only have five people from your post ...” This is a post of 450 dependents so it was very shocking, and my name wasn't on there either. So I quickly filled my form out.

Q: I think I will interject my experience. I was CLO when they were putting together the big thick packet which they sent out. One of the cables that I got, I looked at it, and I really couldn't believe what I was reading. It said, “Tell everybody at your post, all the spouses at your post, to look for a mailing that they're going to get.” I looked at it again and I thought, “Now wait a minute. They can't be serious.” That is what the cable said. I was supposed to inform all the women in my post that they should look for a mailing from the CLO office. That was administratively so sophomoric, I couldn't believe it. And then the big fat thing came out, and I did take a look at it. I obviously looked at mine and one woman brought hers back in. So I put it in the CLO office so anyone could look at it who wanted to. No one ever asked.

SWANSON: I found a lack of interest in it because I think it was too unclear. They were trying to appeal to everyone, and by trying to do that they lost their focal point.

Q: Right. It had no focus and the thing that could have given it focus was to spend a little more money, and computerize a little bit more, and put people in a pre-retirement category, a teenage child category. Categorize people and just send them the information that appealed to them. I don't know what you found as CLO, but I found that people only read what was of interest to them.

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SWANSON: That's right. I think that is what they are now trying to do. That was part of the process they were going through two years ago. I really don't know how in the CLO Quarterly Report, I don't know if they have anything in there. The thing that is nice, that it could have done, was to make this kind of information streamlined like the CLO Quarterly into stuff that they could send out little headlines on. Q: Little updates.

SWANSON: That's right. Then people could pursue that, if they were interested in knowing about it. For example, the changing Overseas Briefing Center focus. They keep adding different courses and subtracting others. Just a variety of things I think are interesting in the OBC at certain points in different people's postings. They may not be interested in the what the Overseas Briefing Center has to offer after they first arrive at post, but when they are about to leave, that is a different story. And a lot of women — that was another interesting thing — a lot of women in Manila, because they are what we affectionately call amateurs to Foreign Service life, (in other words people who had never been overseas before), were totally unaware of what OBC could do for them. If they were under the five major agencies they were eligible to go to OBC. Several women were unaware of this.

Q: *State ... ?*

SWANSON: State, USIS, AID, Agriculture and Commerce. Of those five many of the women weren't aware they could really do this. A lot were USIS women because USIS was a fairly large agency there in Manila and they had one of the two printing facilities or whatever outside the U.S. for USIS materials. Their husbands were obviously very specialized in what they do and they had never heard of these programs. Several of them were very excited that they were being offered, and were more than willing to take them when they came back from the Philippines. When I did come back I happened to run into several of them and they were just thrilled with the courses they'd taken. They had already decided they were going to take everything on the list. After being overseas they wanted to be around others with similar experiences. I think when people first go overseas they are nervous and upset, then they meld in. Many of these ladies had been there for four

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and five years, so they had a real identification with being overseas again. When they come back, they didn't quite fit in and they knew that before they arrived there would be problems in that respect, but they also felt they wanted to keep some of that "difference". They didn't want to lose the experience. I think the Overseas Briefing Center is the perfect way to decompress without losing that special feeling. I think that's what they're looking for.

Q: Why don't you describe your day as CLO in Manila? You had 450 dependents, and you did it alone. I also noticed on your biographic information sheet that you got a Meritorious Honor Award.

SWANSON: That was for the Shultz visit. We had a Shultz visit that came out and GSO was completely swamped, and, as we all know, GSO is the major support group for major visits. Shultz came out quite a few times, in fact Manila, of course, had many, many official visits of Congressmen and other delegations, and I often was asked to help. Other times they used other people to help so it was fine, but on this particular visit, beyond the regular typical CLO duties of helping to arrange shopping tours for staff, or support people, they were totally caught shorthanded in their control room. They had two control rooms, one that was staffed totally by the Foreign Service Officers — usually Junior officers and the consular officers — and the other one that was supposed to be staffed by one American from GSO and one FSN. They didn't have enough Americans and GSO to staff it because they were all busy with everything else, so they asked if I would do some staffing. I ended up working several eight hour shifts in the control room as well as my job as the CLO. I had to do one over midnight shift from 10:00 in the evening until 6:00 in the morning, it was interesting. I don't think I'd want to do it again, and I think they really appreciated the fact I was willing to pitch in and that's why they gave me a group Meritorious Honor Award, with the other GSO people who had to do double overtime.

Q: Oh, but how nice.

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SWANSON: It was very nice to be remembered.

Q: I had such a small embassy that I'm overwhelmed at the thought of 450 dependents. How did your day unfold? I mean you must have been full-time.

SWANSON: Very full time. I started at 8:00 in the morning. There's a compound at Manila that is separate from the embassy so I was not located at the embassy. I was located in the compound. Also in that compound are a large restaurant and club atmosphere, an Olympic-size swimming pool, the playgrounds, the sports field, the medical unit, almost all of GSO is there, the USIS offices for printing and some communications outlets, etc. So it was very spread out and well traveled. And right next to my office — which turned out to be wonderful — whoever designed this was incredibly intelligent — was the commissary. So I had a lot of traffic just from people who had to stop at the commissary and they would stop in my office. It was a very lovely office, which included a connecting room GSO built between my office and the commissary. On the other side of my office was the Teen Center.

That worked very well as far as traffic, and people coming by and things happening. So my day would start at 8:00. I had a message machine which helped when I was out of the office which was quite a bit of the time. I did not have a mail pick-up at my place, so I had to walk down to GSO to take my mail and to get it picked up. GSO became my backbone and they were more than willing to help in almost everything. They were delightfully supportive. So I would be out of the office and miss phone calls. There were a lot of meetings. There [were] two women's clubs in Manila. There was the Embassy Wives Club, which is strictly wives of the U.S. Embassy, whatever agency, but they had to be attached to the Embassy. Then there was the American Women's Club which was open to any American spouse. It was a very large organization, probably 300 women or more on their rolls. Most of the people involved in that one were wives of American businessmen and there is a large representation of American business in Manila. I was an honorary

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board member of both, so I ended up going to a lot of board meetings, which took all morning. I was also on the USEA board.

Q: What was that?

SWANSON: It is the employees organization, USEA is another name for it, U.S. Embassy Association, they ran the commissary. That was also a position where I wasn't elected, the CLO was just normally on the board. I was also on the Housing Board. Housing Board, USEA Board, both of the women's clubs boards and they were always having meetings or something, and the Emergency Action Committee.

Q: Was that evacuation?

SWANSON: Yes. Whenever I went to those meetings, and I missed a couple of them because again they always had them at the Embassy and I was in the other end of the town, so by the time I got there sometimes the EAC part of the meeting was over. (They often combined it with an Economic meeting or whatever). I tried to time it right, but was not also successful. They reviewed a lot on the security situation at post mainly at those meetings. If they felt there was information that needed to be trickled down, then my job would have been to inform spouses in a calm manner and help spouses if they had questions.

On the other hand, I would have spouses come into the office saying, "have you heard about this? I hear that we cannot go to such and such part of the city because of security problems. " Then I had the direct line to the RSO (Regional Security Officer). He was very helpful and we had a good relationship. Towards the end of my tenure as CLO, there were a lot more security problems, a lot more security focus for my job that included a lot of seminars when they had teams coming in to do classes and seminars on security issues. The RSO would call me and ask if I would set up the classes, advertise them, etc., so he didn't have to deal with that aspect through his office. He would ask me to sign up all the people interested, and often the courses were held at the Teen Center. If they were held

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at the Embassy, I had to be sure the lists for each course were correct, where they were located, etc. So there was that kind of new thing that I hadn't done before, that the CLO before had not had to [do] much of either.

Security briefings for spouses were organized through my office and that became a big issue, when the turnover at the Embassy was high and the new Ambassador and his wife arrived and were both very security conscious. She lent all her support towards getting more people to come to these briefings. Before, we had done them every three months and she found that outrageous, she felt they should have been done every month. We would do them every three months and get four or five spouses. In a post that size she was shocked so she really put a lot of her energy and influence into helping us enlarge this program and make it a better program and to bring the RSO out more to the briefings. Generally, the ARSO (Assistant Regional Security Officer) did the briefings and he had a general spiel.

Q: Who was the Ambassador's wife?

SWANSON: Sheila Platt.

Q: Career?

SWANSON: Yes, career. You asked earlier if there were some interesting people for interviews. She was the first person who came to my mind. She worked with the Overseas Briefing Center, and she has done a lot of tapes on stress management in Foreign Service, and what to do in case of an evacuation, the psychological implications of spouses and the need for better informed management people to understand that there is more than just that immediate situation going on. She did some excellent, excellent tapes and they're in the FLO and they're also everywhere there is a CLO in the world. They are also at the OBC, and there is a whole series of them now. They were done with Dr. Rigamer.

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When Mrs. Platt came to post, I reviewed a couple of the tapes and asked if we could actually do one of those seminars with her. The funny thing is that you are on tape and then you're doing this in person at the same time because you have a moderator, somebody that does the seminar, and then you have the tape to supplement. So she found that a little ironic, and also the fact that she was the wife of the Ambassador made it a little tricky for her, but she did it very well. It was a blessing. It was always full, we never had any trouble getting people to sign up for those courses because there was a great need by that point. There was a lot of fear that was not very well answered.

Q: So security waan issue?

SWANSON: Security became more and more of an issue. I enjoyed it and I learned a lot because of her and her approach. It was great. So all I had to do was set up these seminars, my job was easy. I had to set it up and she would do it. It worked really well, and she had an open ear. We had lunch several times to discuss things and keep abreast of things. She was very sympathetic to all the problems that go on in a CLO office, and she understood a lot of them because of her background. She was an exceptional Ambassador's wife to have around. That would be a lot of where my focus was.

Teenagers were yet another big problem there because drinking there starts as early as fifteen for beer in the Philippines, and there is a bar across the street from the American International School and it was very easy to walk in there. They don't have anything such as ID that they ask to see. There's no such thing in the Philippines, they just pass over the beer. Drugs were a problem, although the school tended to play it down.

I also worked a lot with the administration of the school and attended meetings with them. At one time there had been some security problems at school and I asked the RSO if I could go with him out to the school to talk about that from a parental representative type of view. It workeout very well and he was more than happy to take me, and I met many of the board members of the school at that point so I could work with them on these things.

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All of these things came into play at one point or another and I just rode it out. I would wait for something that needed immediate attention, and I would deal with that, and then I would wait for the next thing. I didn't want to dabble in everything and then not have anything fall together. So where the focus was we put a lot of attention and then when that seemed to level out we could leave that a little bit and go on to something else that needed a focus. There was always something. If it wasn't security, then it was welcoming. Or it was the fact that it was just the time of year when everyone was coming in, or everyone is leaving, or that kind of thing.

I was incredibly fortunate. I may have had the job as CLO by myself, but we had wonderful resource support groups. Such as In-Touch, they were my counselors. They were the people I could refer people to for all kinds of psychological needs. They were wonderful.

Q: These were embassy people?

SWANSON: No. This was a private group made up of two Embassy representatives, but the others were international. Social workers and people with advanced degrees in mental health areas. They were where our Mental Health Grant funding went. I sat on that board also, but we never really met because the doctor at post was so enthused with In-Touch that he supported them 100 percent. He would send me the grant proposal In-Touch had done and say, "This is what In-Touch reported they were doing this year and they planned to do next year. Read it over and if you like it sign off on it. We're not even going to have to meet about it."

Q: Fantastic. They were all social workers?

SWANSON: Exactly. They even had a psychiatrist. The other fantastic thing about it was, although they had several Americans involved in the group, they had two Filipinos, two or three Americans, one or two people from Britain, a Japanese psychiatrist. So they had a variety of international people that could help, and they found that beneficial. Often,

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with some of the discomfort that some people felt about being in Manila — they hated the Philippines — and they didn't want to walk in and talk with a Filipino about why they hated his country. So it was nice that they had a choice of counselors from different nationalities, choice of people who would listen to them that could truly sympathize, and not be in a position where they would make the person even more uncomfortable. They were delightful and they also put on a lot of seminars. They put on re-entry seminars, they put on dealing with children overseas seminars. You name it, they could do it. They were always looking for new ideas for seminars so that's where I camin. I loved to say, “I feel there is a need to talk more about ... “

At one point we had about five wives that were in deep marital problems and trying to decide whether they were going to leave, what their rights were, etc. That's a real foggy area. I got a long letter from Phyllis Habib about it because several of the wives had written to her in FL saying, “We want this information”. I didn't have enough of it, and I wasn't really sure. So she sent back a long letter to me stating, “We're not in the divorce business. We can't even refer them to a lawyer, particularly. We can tell them how to find a lawyer — you need to tell them about this and this but make it clear to them that they have to go through these decisions on their own.” This is where In-Touch came in. They could get very good marriage counseling at In-Touch, although In-Touch did not have the legal info, as far as, “if you leave before ten years with your husband, are you eligible for retirement benefits?” These kinds of questions. FLO did have some paper work on that that I could hand out to them, that they could review and get an idea about what they needed to do. “If you leave your children at post and come back to the United States, is that considered abandonment?” These things are very important for U.S. Government dependents to know.

Q: They would be important in your case if you went to court too.

SWANSON: That's right. We knew this kind of thing, so we could help some of the spouses with this. The Philippines again, like many other especially Asian countries,

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I guess, is a very difficult place for western spouses in general just because there are a lot of Asian females there that are very, very appealing to the western male. A lot of marriages that were rocky in the beginning became even more rocky at post. There were just too many temptations — you had to keep your husband on a very short leash. Very true to form there were a lot of women that perhaps were on the verge of divorce, but were in a nervous situation. They couldn't trust their husband, or didn't feel they wanted to trust them, and they had no one to talk to about this and it was all bubbling up. So I had suggested to In-Touch at one time that maybe they could try to get a support group going, a marriage support group different from a divorce group. Something where they could talk this thing out. They tried various means but these women wouldn't come out and do it. I felt really bad about that.

Q: What was the relation of In-Touch to the Embassy? Nothing?

SWANSON: They had two Embassy spouses that were qualified spouses, that joined In-Touch when they got to post. Their Mental Health Grant from the Embassy helped support them in general. This is the Grant available to each post that you apply for and there is so much money from the Department. Dr. Korsack, who at that time was the medical physician at post, was on the In-Touch Board, as well as the board for the Mental Health Grant, so that was their relationship.

Q: So any Embassy spouse who went to that group and discussed her problem, had the possibility of having it filter into the system, or not? I think that would make the big difference. If she isn't, then why did ...

SWANSON: No. They are extremely protective of whom they talk to and for the most part they made it a rule that if it was an Embassy spouse she was not going to be doing the counseling for an Embassy patient or client. And if they ran into each other in the halls in In-Touch, there was a rule also that the employee of In-Touch was never to mention it. The other very big advantage to In-Touch was that their building was a little house out beyond

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the International School where very few Americans show up. It was much more private. If you wanted to go to In-Touch, you could feel confident that you could get there without a lot of people knowing you were there, It was nowhere near the Embassy, nowhere near where Americans congregated.

Q: That sounds like such a big group that people wouldn't necessarily have known that you were there because they would know your car. We've lived in many small posts where that was the case. People knew where you were because of where your car was.

SWANSON: No. Also people had drivers so often the driver would drop them off, and then go on and so it was a much more private situation. I had many women that I knew about, that were having trouble but had not approached me directly. I could recognize voices on the telephone that would ask for the In-Touch number through me because they wanted to keep that anonymity, and I think that's a very valuable thing. So In-Touch became a vital support thing for me, and we worked on several ideas for seminars. I went out and listened to a presentation they did one time and got a tour of the facility, and worked really well with their director. I talked to her quite a bit. She helped us on several instances with some people that really needed help but they needed it subtly. I needed to get them to IN-Touch without making them feel they were being drawn there. She worked well with that and she was extremely professional, and she helped me when I felt that I was beyond what I can do, she would say, "Well Suzanne, this is what we need to do." It was delightful to have such a group.

I would read about all these other CLOs that were so inundated with this and with getting their post's mental health grant in order, and here mine was all done for me because the group did it and they were wonderful, and they depended on that grant money. They did any perceived need, they would be more than willing to listen and try to work something out. They did try very hard on this spouse thing, and it didn't work. Fortunately though many of those spouses — not fortunately, that is the wrong choice of terms — those spouses left after a while and new ones came in wit— again, the focus changes every time

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you have a turnover in personnel. So it was a different thing then and it became more a teenage crisis, how to handle children if they're back in boarding school and you are at post. Or how do you handle children that come in and don't like being here, and are hating you? So there were all kinds of new seminars and they were extremely flexible trying to develop something that would be interesting to people, and that people would want to listen to.

Q: Do you think that's the most important type of thing you did as a CLO? The spouses and children — the disturbed spouses and ...

SWANSON: I don't think it was the most important thing I did. I think it was necessary and needed, that they needed someplace to go. But my frustration in that was that often my office was not set up for private conversations. What I did when I first got there was — they had a copy machine that they installed in my office so I wouldn't have to run down to GSO ...

Q: Oh, just for you. I thought other people would be using it.

SWANSON: Well, what I decided to do ... I said to GSO, "How can I make this so other people can come in and use this copy machine without it being illegal?" They said, "What you are going to have to do is find some way for them to pay you for the copies, but you can't keep the money." So I developed a system where I would charge a nickel or they would put a donation in, and they could use the copy machine, use the paper. I would buy the paper from USEA instead of getting it from GSO on government money. I bought the paper from USEA out of the money they donated so it was sort of their paper. So the only expense other than that was for maintaining the machine. The balance of whatever was left in the copy machine money went to the Women's Club for their charity.

It was a wonderful system and GSO was happy to oblige because it saved them paper. I would occasionally order paper from them because that would be my work paper. I tried to balance it that way. I had a lot of people use that machine, and that became an incredible

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way to learn what was going on in the world because everybody I met was in there at one time or another to borrow the machine and they were very good about putting money in it. It was a good morale booster, they didn't have to bother their husbands for that one little copy at work and feel guilty. They could say, "Oh no, I can go down and pay my money and xerox," and donate to charity at the same time. It worked out very well but it became a constant traffic thing. I always had people waiting to use the copy machine. The other thing I did was ...

Q: It got so it took away the privacy of your office when you needed it.

SWANSON: Exactly, and that's exactly what happened. I'll never forget the day a friend of mine, and I swear she was in tears ... and she saw me and started to come in, and somebody else came in right behind her and she stopped and I said, "Is something wrong?" and she said, "Oh no, no, it's my allergies." Come to find out there had been something very wrong but even if she'd begun to tell me, there was no time and no way, and you cannot grab this person and haul them back and say you have to tell me because then everybody's peeking. That was a problem. One time we had a man come through from Jakarta who was interested in hiring someone as a regional librarian in Manila — he wanted an Embassy spouse and so he set up interviews for spouses through me. It got very complicated, a long story. The point of it was when the wives came in to sign up for this job they had to write down what their background was, or give me an idea so he'd have an idea of why they were interested in this position. At some point another wife was standing there listening to one of the potential applicants say, "Oh, I've done this and this and this". Then later on this spouse who was listening is saying at a cocktail party "Oh, well I am sure so and so will get it because she has done ... " The applicant heard the woman say this and she thought I had spread this information around. She felt very personal about her background and did not want others to know all about it. She came in and talked to me personally. She said, "I think this came from your office and I don't

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understand why this was let out". So I had to explain to her that when they had the list for sign ups other people were in and out of there and they could hear what was said.

So there was that kind of problem that I really tried to guard against but it is very difficult. I did it to the point where if there were women in there that were in all the time anyway, and something happened, I would turn to them and say, "This doesn't leave this room." Because they happened to be in a matter of circumstance, they were there, but they needed to realize that they couldn't walk out and say, "Did you hear what happened in Sue's office this morning?"

Q: Oh, that would be a handicap. I used to close my door and lock it.

SWANSON: No, you couldn't do that here. We had glass doors and I did get an inner office that they built on later that had a library in it and all the catalogues were in there on a big table so people could sit down and look at the catalogues and read. It was also a nice place for meetings. The Embassy Women's Clubs had small meetings there, or other small groups and that worked all right. I'd intended to use that for some really critical talks that had to be done.

Q: Oh yes. If there were glass windows and people could look in and see who was talking to you — and you can tell when it's a serious conversation.

SWANSON: This was the problem. I can remember one woman had just suffered a miscarriage and was feeling pretty low, and it is a sensitive subject and she was just bummed. She had just told me that she was pregnant, and she was worried because she had friends that had had miscarriages. So she knew it could happen, and she wasn't telling anyone yet, then sure enough, it happened to her. So she came into the office with me and were talking in the inner office because I wanted to make sure she was going to be okay, and tell her that I've been there myself, and I knew how it felt, so we were just trying to talk. But I can remember even now people opening the door and saying, "Can I come in

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and look at the catalogues?" Even if she would have wanted to let it all out it would have been very inappropriate for her. It was a very frustrating thing for me.

Again, the copy machine and the typewriter that I installed in there turned out to be bonuses beyond that, because people were drawn in there. The typewriter was my typewriter and I put it over in the corner by the copy machine — I've got a computer, a Wang and I used that exclusively after that, so I left the typewriter there for spouses to come and practice typing so they could take the typing test. I asked Personnel to send over one of their not used typing tests so I could time them and tell them how they were doing, it worked out to be a great boon. Several spouses used it in that respect. Other spouses, like the secretary of the Women's Club, didn't have a typewriter but had to type up the minutes, so she would come in and borrow the typewriter to type up the minutes, newsletters of some kind or another or social service projects. It is very difficult on a volunteer basis to find something so my office became very valuable in that respect. People dropped things off constantly in my office. I had a garbage pile a mile deep of donations of clothing, and food to the different charities, when they were going out, of toys and crayons, and paper. I became a focal point for a lot of things. Through my office in one day could have been 50 people easily so it became a very busy point.

It was just maintaining all that and the irritation was when I went to these meetings, which were frequent and which lasted a long time — two or three hours — the office was closed and people would be furious. "Why is the office closed?" They wanted it open and if I stayed after hours to finish things — the commissary closed at 6:00 — people would stop by on the way to the commissary, see me inside and pound on the door. It didn't matter that it was locked, they saw me in there so they wanted in. I toyed with the idea of making a couple of late hours a couple days a week, staying until 6:30 because a lot of officers that didn't get over during the day from the Embassy had a loaf questions, or uses for the CLO, but they couldn't get in. Especially for single officers and people like that so they

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would mention that to me and say, "I would come over and use your office more often if it was open beyond 8:00 - 5:00. But I never could urge myself to do that.

Q: There are limits.

SWANSON: Also, someone very wisely told me, I think it was the CLO before me before she left, she said, "Sue, you'll change the hours and everybody will just get confused, nobody will remember when you're open and when you're closed. And even when you're open late that will be the one night that nobody will come, and they'll come the next day and want to know why you're not open early in the morning."

Q: That probably was very wise advice. How much orientation did she give you on her job?

SWANSON: That turned out to be very helpful. She had been there for the full two years, she was an AID wife, it was her second visit to the Philippines. She had been there during the Vietnam war when her husband was stationed in Vietnam, so she would use the Philippines as her base. She might be a good person to interview, I don't know if you do AID wives or not.

Q: Yes, we need some. What is her name?

SWANSON: Rosemary Mills. She is delightful.

Q: Maybe you could interview her.

SWANSON: I would love to.

Q: Good. Fine.

SWANSON: She has a lot of very interesting background, especially on being in the Philippines. She has been an AID wife for a long time. Her husband just recently retired. When I got there the appointment was going through and her official appointment was

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ending in October and I started in October, but they hired her on temporarily which was the Admin Counselor's idea. He loved her too, so he didn't want to lose her completely, so he hired her back to train me for about four weeks. It worked out very, very well because we split a lot of things. She would let me go to all the meetings but she could keep the office open. Then as things came up, which is the most important part of a CLO job, the paperwork and the files and everything is there, but it is the people. I could say, "Well, gee, this person came in last night and told me all these horrible stories. Am I to believe this, or is this true?" She'd say, "Let me tell you the background on that." She was invaluable.

There was a fire shortly after I became the CLO in the house of one of our people that were with the military but they were still under the Embassy umbrella. I'd never met them but Rosemary happened to hear about it, it was in her village where she lived. She went over there and saw that it was a totally devastating fire. They lost everything. She immediately called and said, "Sue, I want you to know this so you can help get things started." She was very supportive and helped and I organized a thing to get clothing donated. We got on it much faster than if it had trickled down through the powers that be to me. So there were odds and ends like that where she was extremely helpful. And just advice and having another CLO there that knows what it's like, knows the frustrations, knows the problems that can happen. She warned me about a lot of situations that fortunately did not reoccur, but could have, and it was helpful to have her there to tell me, "I've been through this and it hurt like everything but it's better now." So a lot of situations that could have happened I was prepared for, or at least better prepared for, so it was nice.

Q: Forewarned is forearmed.

SWANSON: That's right. I know many women walk in cold in that job, and I don't think it is a problem, eventually you get your feet on the ground. When I left we had a turnover in Admin counselors, but he felt the same way. I was pregnant at the time and I kept telling him that I was going to have this baby in February or March and we had to get going on

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this. (Finding another CLO). He kept saying, "Can't you postpone this delivery until June or July?" He was not focused on it at all. But when it happened it worked out well and he was really sweet. I delivered the baby and I delivered early which was the big problem. The Ambassador's wife was on pins and needles. She kept saying, "Sue, you should have had this all figured earlier." I'm going, "But I like this job." She kept saying, "Babies never wait. It may come early." "No, not my baby". But it did. I ended up having to leave the office in the middle of the day and there was a first aid class going on in the Teen Center, I had to tell the lady that was in the first aid class, "Lock up for me." I just left. I had to go into the hospital, but even then I thought it was a false alarm and that I'd be able to come back, but I didn't. The Embassy Women's Club took over as far as keeping the office open, which was great. They had volunteers and they loved it. They could all sit at the desk, and spin the chair around, so they were happy. And they kept the functioning side of it, people could get the catalogues, and the school books, and the copy machine and the typewriter. The functional things were all there, and then they kept track of my phone messages which was wonderful and if they could help they would, and if they didn't have any idea of what they were talking about they'd take it all down for me. They brought things by for me in the hospital — not work things, but just to keep me up-dated. So that worked out fine but we still didn't have a real CLO and I would be leaving in May and it was now March and we really needed to think about getting the CLO set up. When I got home — I had a C-Section — and when I'd gotten home the Admin Counselor said we had more applications. We had sent out the advertisement long ago and that process takes a while. He said "So why don't we interview them. I would like you to help me interview." We had two choices, he could either interview with me, or he could interview with the Employee Board. That was the other thing I was on, the Employment Board, which was a very good board because it was made up of all the different agency people that sat on it, then they would review the applications, not necessarily interview the people, but review the process. The person that had decided on someone for a job in his or her area had to present to the board why they were picking so and so for the job. I found that this was my most influential position because 99 percent of the time the other people had no idea who these candidates were,

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and I did. Generally the decision was already made by the hiring person, but it was helpful.
[end of tape 1, side A, begin tape 1, Side B]

Q: That's just exactly what we're doing and maybe if we do this again we would focus on one of these things. I keep thinking of things too as you talk. I notice reading this quarterly this morning, it said basically that some women aren't as interested in those PIT (Part-Time, Intermittent, Temporary) jobs as they used to be. That they're not the attractive jobs they were when they were first created, and I wondered about that because we had underemployed women in the Embassy in Port of Spain. We were lucky because it was English speaking and two of them did get jobs in their fields on the local economy, and [the] pay scale in the local economy was sufficiently high to make it worthwhile to go out and work too. But did you find that women were really ecstatic to have a job with the commissary, or a visa clerk?

SWANSON: The Consular Section in Manila did not hire any American spouses except as AVLOS (Automated Visa Look Out System) Clerks. This was a computerized list of people and names for fraudulent visa schemes. The applicants would come into the Embassy and their name would be Paul Sanchez or whatever, and the AVLOS job would be to look through all the Sanchezes in the system to see if there had ever been a Sanchez that had been faking all of his documents, etc. If there was, then they had to notify the officer. There was also something else they had to do that could only be done by an American spouse and I don't know what it was about exactly, but it had something to do with a seal of some kind that made this an official document and an official visa. It couldn't be given to an FSN because it was too easy to duplicate.

Q: I am surprised that they would give it to a spouse though.

SWANSON: There's such a visa mill in Manila that they only had so many officers and they were constantly on the line interviewing, that there had to be an American to supervise this seal thing that went back, so they knew it went from the American to

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the officer is basically what it was. Again, I may a little off on my description but it was something along those lines. So there was a real need for these particular people, and that was the only Americans they hired in the core of the Consular Section. They had some ancillary secretarial positions and things where they were doing statistics and background, but they did not have visa clerks. They were offering training (in the Department) for spouses to go out and do this sort of thing at certain posts, but at this post ... I approached the Deputy Consul General about it and she said it just wouldn't work here. She had very good reasons but it was very sad that it wouldn't work here. I mentioned it even to the Inspectors when they came out and they liked the idea because they were looking into spouse employment also. It just wasn't going to happen.

Q: What were the major spouse jobs?

SWANSON: The major spouse jobs were teachers at I.S. [International School], There were a lot of problems at that, the usual problems, low salary, not paid as well as those Americans that were hired in the States, conflicts of interest with the Filipino teachers at the school, not enough this, not enough that. Those were the problems with teaching. The other major area spouses could work in would be secretarial in the Embassy and there were a number of good jobs but they were only paid at the PIT level position of FS-9, which is \$14,000 a year. So they were certainly underpaid. \$14,000 they could get if they worked a full-time job, a fairly responsible job, getting the traffic, getting a clearance and all that stuff. Typing all these cables and doing everything that a Foreign Service secretary does, but at a lower ...

Q: But at a fraction of the pay.

SWANSON: The lowest echelon they could possibly get as far as pay went. I would say that was the major job. But there were some good ones. There was a really interesting job a lot of women thought would be great with the refugee program. There was another very well paying job, a good job, as assistant to the Director of the Peace Corps in the

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Philippines. That was something for a very skilled person, and the woman who had it was excellent, but they paid her well. That was not an FS-9 position at all, that was a very well paid job. The other one that came along that turned out to be a better paying job, and an interesting job, was a security assistant job, not a secretary. She went around — the newest thing in security these days is putting in bars and electronic equipment so you can have a safe haven in your house and all this stuff ... Q: You mean they're doing that to houses?

SWANSON: Every individual house, yes. It's a new thing that security got all this money, but that's what it's for. Every house is supposed to have a radio, and Manila was targeted as a high security threat so therefore they started on their post sooner. So they had to find somebody that could help look at the houses, figure out what they needed to do, so they were training her. She was a nurse in background.

Q: [did the government own these houses?]

SWANSON: No, that would be renting.

Q: Renting, and we're putting all this in, and then the next person comes along and doesn't like the house and wants to move somewhere else, does all that stuff go out?

SWANSON: That was all discussed, that obviously was a big problem. The Housing Board discussed it, Admin discussed it, GSO discussed it, RSO discussed it. What they ended up doing was getting as many long term contracts on houses that they could explain to the landlord what they were planning to do, and then people would be forced to live there. They had to get away from the "Prima Ballerina" idea that, "I want a deck, or I want a swimming pool," and back to the realities of "you are going to live here and that is it." They had been tending away from that and the FBO and other such people were pulling them back into the fold saying, "You have to do this". GSO, as always, is caught between a rock and a hard place, they're loved by FBO and theare hated by the people at post. Or they're

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loved by people at post and hated by FBO, and they couldn't win. So they did the best they could with what they had. That was another job, anyway.

Q: What about housing there?

SWANSON: I think housing basically was pretty good and most people, if you talk to them, would agree. Mr. biggest problem, (the Admin Counselor teased me about this because I mentioned it in front of the inspectors at a "stellar" housing board meeting we had for their benefit), was staff apartments. The inspectors had come out to post and were making observations on how the Housing Board worked, so, of course, I'm sitting there badgering on about the one element of bad housing at post, and he thought that was funny. He said, "Some people would say that takes a lot of guts, Sue". It was true, and everybody on the Board agreed. They had on the compound that I mentioned earlier, they also had living arrangements. Most of the people that lived there were the support staff type people, the secretaries, etc. Those, as the old line goes, that didn't have representational responsibilities. They had two sections: they had town houses which were very nice, not necessarily really big but centrally air conditioned with dishwashers, garbage disposals, decks off the town houses, two or three levels and they were very nice. Most people who lived in town houses were happy with those. But on the other side of the compound they had what I would call the little ghetto and they were the old apartment and the balconies where you had to walk along were actually starting to tilt because ... not that much, but they were tilting, and they were sagging, and the apartments were small and they were cramped. Most of the housing requests that we got on the Board were to go from an apartment to a town house. The other option they had were modern high-rise apartments available downtown. Especially the junior officers did not want to be on the compound. Their argument, and it's a valid one, and the Housing Board recognized that, is they wanted to feel more of the flavor of the city, and be part of the city and not just part of the American Community. That was considered when they put them into these high-rise apartments, and they were down in the red light district, but it was just fine and it was relatively safe. There were a couple security questions that the RSO had, and they

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addressed them fairly well. So they were in those. Those were the options but the staff apartments were the last straw. They had the money at one point to build more town houses, but they never got built. I kept telling them they ought to camp everybody in the middle of the play field during the hot part of the year, and build those town houses where they had those staff apartments so there was more equity. Everybody could agree but nobody could do much about it.

The big thing was whether they qualified for a house or not. Houses in Manila are nice and if you can live in a house, you would. You'd die for a house over an apartment or a town house, or certainly a staff apartment. There were some problems with that.

The other problem was there was a faction in the Embassy that believed all of their people should live in the most high-class village. And then there was the rest of the Embassy that had to live in a less high-class village. That got to be a fairly divisive thing on Housing Board meetings because it was always, "My person has to live in this particular village". It's like, "Why?" So there was that.

And then there was the fact there had been a flood in the lesser loved village that flooded people out. They had up to five feet of water in their houses so they had to get rid of these houses because these floods could happen again and again. They were really at the lower end of the village where the water level could change at any time. The only houses available for GSO to lease at the time happened to be in the better village so that established a precedent. They didn't have any choice at the time but the precedent was definitely there. So some people who may not have the rank, or the representation, were living in very lovely homes, where other people that might have more rank or more representation, were in much smaller homes. So there was that problem. I was happy with my little house, I had a nice little house near the compound. I could walk to work if I wanted. It was in a court and it was a sweet house, it had three bedrooms and a small dining room and living room, but my husband was still a junior officer — well, technically a junior officer — so we didn't have a lot of need for anything much bigger. It had a lanai, and a little swimming pool

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even. So I mean, what could you ask for? It was delightful. Most people basically were happy if they got a house. If they didn't, there would be more complaints for reasons that everybody considered valid. On the other hand, not everybody can live in a town house, not everybody can live in a house. It has to be divided up the best it can. I think morale went up and down depending upon who was living where.

Q: What about representation? Did people really use their representational houses?

SWANSON: No. Well, that's not entirely true.

Q: Some did yes, but my feeling was that the United States Government is paying for a lot of representational housing abroad that is not being used as it was intended to be used.

SWANSON: The Ambassador — the first Ambassador at post — Ambassador Bosworth had very wisely, I think, cut the official list back to a very small amount. But when the Inspectors came out they were still surprised. They felt there were more people that were eligible for representation reimbursements, not necessarily for the housing, that more people should entertain, and use the representation allotments than did.

Q: That, I think, is universal too.

SWANSON: They were really surprised, and I said, "I think part of it is, if they don't have a big house, they don't want to do it." It boils down to a kind of naa-naa.

Q: I don't think that was it at all. I don't think they want to do it anyway.

SWANSON: That's true too. The Counselor level did do representation a lot. The Ambassador's residence was constantly busy. The DCM's residence was busy. Obviously at that level there was a lot of entertaining, a lot of it done well. But when you got into the First and Second officers in the group they weren't on the list, but even though they

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could entertain they just didn't do it. And they may have had just as nice a house as the Counselor.

Q: And access to representational funds?

SWANSON: That's right, but they weren't going to do it. The Counselors all pretty much did. I probably myself attended at least one function at every Counselor's hours, except maybe the AID Counselor. He did too, but it was just that his focus was on a different part. The director of the Peace Corps had a lot of functions. I thought that was interesting because those were great to go to because there was such a variety of people. That was fun. It's a very large post and a lot of the entertaining can be done at restaurants too.

Q: Because it's inexpensive?

SWANSON: A lot of times you ended up going to a banquet room in a restaurant and somebody hosted it. A lot of the Filipinos did that. You didn't go into a lot of homes in the Philippines and that is also very common in other countries. My husband was fortunate to go to several things at people's homes that he was very impressed about and enjoyed. For the most part when we were invited to some sort of official function outside of the Embassy itself, they were done in restaurants. So I think a lot of Embassy people reciprocated the same way. There was a lot of entertaining done through lunches and dinners and things like that.

Q: I never think it's the same ...

SWANSON: No, it's not. The other interesting thing, and I'm sure this is true again worldwide, the American Ambassador's residence really was an oasis to many of the American business people, and they always had a list of American business people that they invited to their receptions. I always marveled at the wisdom of that because they really appreciated it, and when the Bosworths left, I think the business community was more upset than anybody that there wasn't going to be an Ambassador for a while.

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Q: There goes our link with home.

SWANSON: The American Women's Club was the same way. They wanted to use the American residence all the time for functions or something because it was home, and it felt good to be there. Embassy wives never quite understood that and I'd always try to explain it to them because I felt that was part of the reason there was some friction between the two groups. That was another part of my goal, to make both groups a little more flexible with each other. They took it for granted, "... the residence, we'll just use that." It was that kind of an attitude. Whereas the American business community was thrilled whenever Mrs. Platt or Mrs. Bosworth offered the residence. The Ambassador's wife is their honorary president of their group, as she is of the Embassy Wives Club, but it was less important — it was automatic in the Embassy wives group. It was interesting. I really believe the Ambassador's residence in every country should be well maintained, well represented with American art, and have an American feel, even if it is architecturally done in a style that is very local. I know that Sheila Platt came back and bought artwork, even brought her own artwork to hang in the Residence. She had some funds from the American Art Overseas Program, but she also brought some of her own. She did a wonderful job and she was very good about whenever she had teas, whether with the Embassy or with American wives in general, she would give little tours so they could see this artwork. She really had a feel for that. I really admired that because I thought that was very important. I had made several friends in the American business community that were just really, really happy that she had gone to this trouble. They were just thrilled that she was there and that they could use the residence and it was really important. And Chris Bosworth had been very fond of the American Women's Club too, and she had done a lot with them too, so ...

Q: It sounds like you had very good support from GSO, Admin, the Ambassador's wife.

SWANSON: I forgot to tell you ... you know you think about it and I really had the best job in the world because all I had to do was point people in the right direction and somebody else would take care of the problem. I had In-Touch, I had GSO, I had the Admin section

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in general which were very supportive of everything. I had [a] summer jobs program, I was the representative — that was a major job. But the American Women's Club did most of it. They had a whole committee and all I had to do was my little part which was just the Embassy teens, which was not half as bad as the millions of others. That worked out very well, and I had help with that from Embassy Wives Club people. The Embassy wives themselves were always supportive of anything I asked them to do, money I might need for some program I wanted to run. They would donate the money, and the EWC ran the travel group. I didn't ever organize a travel trip anywhere. If somebody said, "Gee, I want to take a trip to Cebu." I would say, "Call so and so. They're on the travel committee." It was perfect. So in that sense I had mega support. There were a lot of function things that had to be done in my office. There were a lot of meetings that had to be attended, people to meet, people to talk to. That's what my job boiled down to. And as I said, with employee hiring — Spouse Employment Committee — when I went to that I had to know who these people were. I wasn't being fair to them if I couldn't say, "Yes, I know her. I know she's very enthusiastic and she'd like the job." That kind of thing happened a lot.

There were several instances where the fact that I did know these people and I had a history of knowing how many jobs they'd applied for, helped. Because the employers would say, "Gee, I didn't realize she'd applied for 6,000 jobs". The Personnel Officer may have been aware of that, but other than he and I no one else on the Committee did.

Q: Oh, so in other words if she'd applied over and over and over again, and didn't get them, it's time we gave her one.

SWANSON: That's right. So that came in handy several times and it worked out well for the employee, and employer. There were things like that, and there was one instance though that was very bad. They had originally chosen one person for this job — it was in the communication pouch unit — and they needed an American to help with the classified pouch for distribution out. They'd originally chosen one woman who'd helped them out before and then suddenly there was a young man available and they leap-frogged over the

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woman for the man. I put up a stink about it. I said, "This doesn't seem quite fair." And then I pointed out that the young man already had a job over in another section, so I pointed out that he already had a job and he hadn't been there six months. That was the rule, the Personnel Officer unfortunately was not at this meeting and the Admin Counselor was brand new. It was about the first time he'd had one of these meetings so he wisely said, "Wait a minute. I don't want to get into any problems here, I understand who you want, I understand your reasons why, but I think we're going to put all of this on hold." Which was wise but what we ended up doing was a compromise situation where the employer got the man he wanted, the other section lost out on an already employed body. However, he had to stay the six months in the first job, and they told him that. Well, the one that really kind of lost out was the other woman. So what they did was, they hired her temporarily to fill in until the young man could come over and take the job permanently. She is looking at this with "Why?". So I had a long talk with her and I told her exactly what had happened because nobody on the committee wanted to talk to her. I said, "Listen, I think you really need to understand that the employer had what he thought were valid reasons, that you were his next choice, and that's why they called you to come in as a temporary." I said, "What I think is going to happen is they're going to find they need more people anyway." Which is what happened, and, "She stayed on as a temporary. That's not as good as being a permanent employee, but I think this young man is going to go back to college eventually and you're going to be here a little while and you'll take over." She wasn't totally happy with that because the rumors were ripe, which was terrible through the FSNs, saying things about the hiring practice.

The other problem was the Assistant Personnel Officer, because it was his son that got this job. He had bent over backwards to stay out of the situation, but what I found out later was when the Personnel Officer returned, he felt the APO should have jumped right in and straightened it out then. Because it was his son, the APO didn't want to be seen as having any influence whatsoever, negative or positive, period. So he just backed out completely. It caused a brouhaha, but fortunately it worked out eventually. That committee, it is the

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only way to do it because even though they can be told something, and they don't know the person, it's a nice feeling that you know you're being considered by more than just one individual.

Q: How often did you call Washington about things? Of course, you had a big support system.

SWANSON: I had a great support system, I hardly called them at all at first. When Sheila arrived she made this sweet, diplomatic, remark that FLO would love to know what I was doing. She said, "You know, they're always worried, they don't hear from you very often." At first I said, "Oh, that's nice to be thought of." Then I thought, "Wait a minute, maybe that's a hint." Actually they ended up calling me when we had a big blowup at Clark (Air Base) and three men were shot — three Americans were killed — they called me and asked how things were and if I needed anything. They were very good about it. I had sent in quarterly reports and that kind of detail stuff, and I read these religiously and I did what they told me to do, and they sent me a cable, but I had not really, as you said, called Washington. I am not sure that I really needed to for the most part because they were giving me a lot of written information that I was finding helpful. Now, the divorce issue was one thing and I had correspondence with Phyllis Habib on that, but that again was strictly by letter, I didn't bother to call. So, when the security thing blew up and they called me, they were really sweet about it and they wanted me to know they were there and if I needed anything to let them know. Sheila brought the message with her, so by that time I thought, "Well, maybe I do." Then they offered the conference back here and I applied to go. They had to kind of do a lottery thing and they had to draw from different areas to do it, they didn't have funds for everyone that wanted to go. But they felt I had the need, and I had not been, and since I was in a security situation that maybe it would be helpful. So when I came back, meeting them face to face, made it much easier to go back to post knowing what they did here.

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Q: Excuse me. You actually had a CLO meeting here? Because I went to two in Mexico City and one of the things we said was, "Look, what we'd love to do is not come to Mexico City, but to come home." So good, I'm glad they're doing that now.

SWANSON: Since then ... they got the money from the military for that particular thing, and it was an inter-bureau meeting. It wasn't all southeast Asia bureau ...

Q: Inter-regional.

SWANSON: Inter-regional, thank you. Inter-regional meeting, and that was lovely because Abidjan was there, and Stockholm was there. I met with people from a variety of places around the world.

Q: That's wise because we also found that just because we were all in the Caribbean, if you were from a great big post your problems weren't the same as theirs. Your problems were with the other posts. So was this all large ...

SWANSON: They were mixed up. But what they did do in the conference, they tried to get the larger posts to have lunch together and talk about their particular problems as opposed to the smaller posts. They have heard this before, and they were very aware that this can be a problem. Talking to the larger post lunch didn't really work out very well. I don't know why. I mean I wasn't real satisfied with that part of the conference although when you do the critique at the end — I'd forgotten about it so I didn't mention it. We just didn't get much decided at that lunch. The interesting thing was Bangkok was there, Bangkok is even larger than I am — or Manila — was. Bangkok has one CLO, but she has two or three CLO assistants that are paid. For some reason I didn't focus on that. She mentioned it when she did her presentation to the group. I just kind of dismissed it with "Oh, that's nice" and didn't think about it because I had sort of gotten into a trend on my own. But when I went back, Sheila Platt said, "Did you talk about CLO assistants?" She saw my job as just too much, because I really did work more than my 40 hours a week. If I worked only 45

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hours a week, it was a surprise to me and to my husband, and to everybody. Sheila really wanted to have — you know, the big problem was keeping the office open when I had to be somewhere else and she really felt that I needed help and she was really, I mean, she didn't mean it in a negative way, it was a positive thing.

Q: That was my first thought when you talked about how many people were there.

SWANSON: She said, "Sue, you do too much". And then she was upset when I would help with Congressional tours. She would come right out and say, "You can't have the CLO do that too."

Q: We really weren't supposed to help with ...

SWANSON: No, I know it. Still, I didn't mind, and it was [a] different thing to do. And what I had drawn on, and what was fun for them was from the Embassy Wives Club, I asked for volunteers who would be interested to meet their Congressmen and they could help with the tours. I asked them to give me their states of origin, and when there was a Congressional visitor from that state, I tried to match them up with the shopping tours. A lot of the ladies were already into shopping, and knew a lot more than I did about areas to go, so I would always have them come along with me. It worked out really well. Sheila went on my little tours, and she told my husband later that, "Maybe Sue should do something in that line of work, she's very good." So she enjoyed it. She was impressed. She told him, "I wanted to go and see just how much work this is for the CLO." So it worked out well.

Q: She sounds like a neat lady.

SWANSON: She is, she's amazing. I was really impressed with her and I can only say the highest things about her. She was very helpful.

What I learned from the conference was invaluable and I was focusing on some other aspects of it, since I knew eventually I would be leaving because this was in September

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and we were leaving in May, and I knew I was pregnant at the time. I was coming to the end of my time. So I was trying to focus, I think, on ways to help the new CLO and what kind of thing the FLO could offer — organizational things. They were very good. I think the conference was well run and they did bring in State people, which was nice. We had all the PMOs from all the different bureaus represented talking about being part of the Admin team and what that meant. That was a very good conversation because they were very blunt, and they said, “For some of us a CLO doesn't mean much at all, and we had to learn the hard way how important CLOs can be.” Then they would give their own personal examples. I think it was helpful to most of the people in that room to hear that it was a long struggle, and that for the most part people were very satisfied with and treat professionally the people who take these jobs.

Q: I think George Shultz did the CLOs a great favor.

SWANSON: I think he did too. Anyway, there was a lot of that and we heard from the Mental Health people at post — the State Department people — and the medical people. They just drew in a lot of different departments to talk to us. It was very beneficial all the way around because we learned more about how to send them to retirement seminars, how to send them to this and to that. We came armed with all these new booklets and things that were out, that we could take back to post and distribute to the Personnel Officer or the RSO. Security, DS, came and talked to us. We had a lot more information.

Q: Who was in charge of that seminar?

SWANSON: The woman before Terry Williams ... the CLO Support Officer ...

Q: Was it still Pat Telkins then?

SWANSON: Yes. Pat Telkins. Well, we all did something, they all did their part. Each officer had a section that they did. Eileen Milas was there at the time. I'll never forget. She walked in with this “Calamities” book that she keeps in in her office, and she said,

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“Everybody chuckles when they see this (about two inches thick). It's all the calamities that ever happened in any part of the world. She said, “Before you leave I want all of you to find your country and look up what has happened in your country. You'll be surprised.” She said, “It sounds like I'm the voice of doom, but it really is helpful.” I've never forgotten that. I looked up the Philippines and they had about four pages of listed calamities in a row from the time they started recording. Most of them were earthquakes and tidal waves, monsoons and floods. But it was just incredible.

Q: Were they all natural calamities?

SWANSON: Natural calamities. Earthquakes especially. The reason she was so interested in this, she was the CLO in El Salvador when they had that massive earthquake, and they had to evacuate everybody from post for a while, and try to get everything back to normal. So she had a real concern that CLOs were thinking about terrorists and things like that and were totally drawn away from the possibilities of fires, storms, earthquakes, volcanos, natural disasters that also happen overseas. All these things kind of played a part and it was very well done, I think.

Q: So you knew what to watch for when you went back.

SWANSON: So when I went back I began to use them (FLO) more often. and Sheila finally got it through my thick skull that it might be a nice idea to get a CLO assistant, I knew why I was dragging my feet and I made it clear to her and she understood this. I'd done this for 18 months and like the way I had it set up, and I was worried it would be ... well ... I had a nice feeling with almost everybody there, and I was worried that pulling in a CLO assistant, choosing someone, would hurt somebody else's feelings.

Q: ... undo a lot that you'd one.

SWANSON: I would have to rearrange my own way of thinking, and way of doing things. So it occurred to me that what I needed to do was not get a CLO assistant for myself but

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get a CLO assistant for the new CLO, and that it had to be somebody that could work with that CLO. We had to have the CLO first, so she could help make the decision, but I would help her choose her so it would draw off that onus of picking her, you know what I mean? Sheila thought that sounded fine. So that's how we went. But then we had to decide how we were going to pay for the CLO assistant because the Admin Counselor had said right out, "Sue, there's no money, no way. No PIT position will be done for this position." Then he suggested, "I think this is a good question for Mother FLO". So I wrote the cable, and asked them for help on this. They called me, instead of cabling me back, and they said, "Sue we have two great suggestions for you. One is Paris, where they have lots of volunteers in their Embassy and they work on a volunteer basis. The other one is the CLO assistant idea that is paid for out of Bangkok." So I contacted both of them by cable. They both sent back a detail of how their system worked. We liked the Bangkok system very well because they ran it through their Employee Board. Their Employee Association paid the funding for the assistant in Bangkok. Then I had to prepare — right in the middle of delivering my baby — the reasons why I thought this could work. Bob MacCallum, the Admin Counselor, was very kind about taking the request to the USEA (U.S. Embassy Association) Board meeting since I was in the hospital. I had written up some notes and stuff and he said his only problem was I probably could have had more reasons for why I wanted this, other than just what they would do, but they were willing to think about it. Then I did go to the next meeting, with the baby in tow, and explained to them what I wanted — the baby is crying and I am rocking her back and forth — it was rather clever. All these businessmen sitting there going "uh-huh" as I'm rocking this baby and discussing it. They were very good about it.

We worked all of it out, and then when the new CLO was hired — which brings me back to the original thing — the Admin Counselor decided instead of using the Employment Committee, that he and I would choose the CLO which was within the Personnel Regulations. We interviewed them at my house because I was still on maternity leave and recovering from a C-section. He came over in the middle of his day, we sat down, had

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coffee, we talked. It worked out very well. After the candidates left, he talked it over with me and I would say “Well, so and so did ...” We only had two applicants for my job. We actually had four, but two of them had to be disqualified. One could not get a full security clearance, and the other one did not meet all the requirements, so that left two. It was a real disappointment as far as the number of people, but I felt both of them were very good. So I told him that and he — at first he was leaning towards this one particular person because he didn't know much about the other one and he figured he would select this one. I had told him I thought he would be impressed with the second one, and he was. Then he was in a quandary, like “Now I don't know what to do”. He finally went with what he thought would be the best choice all the way around, and that was fine and called her up and told her she had the job and all. Both of them had felt really bad that there were only two applicants. I wanted to tell them and I did ... I told the one that won easier because I could talk to her personally about it, but the other one I wrote a little note to and I told her I hoped she continued trying to get that position because I thought she'd be really good and that I really admired her and what she had done already at post, and I hoped she would continue in this line of work. I really felt letting them both know this was important.

So when the new CLO came in, we discussed right away about a CLO assistant, and we pulled in a person that I had always found delightful anyway, and I would have loved her immediately. She did decide to apply for the job, and we had five or six applicants for the CLO assistant job. The Admin Counselor was amazed, and I said, “I think it is because there is less onus on this job, there is less stress, and it would be more fun.” So, we hired the CLO assistant and then I trained both of them at the same time, which was a little hectic. They kept me on as the original CLO, and then paid the new CLO on an hourly basis until her paperwork went through. So that all worked out pretty well.

I just received a letter from the CLO assistant that said they are making her job a PIT now. So they have been real happy with her, and she was a gem because she was a military spouse and pulled a lot of people in from the JoinU.S. Military Association Group, (JUSMAG) which was in the north end of Manila, and very rarely had contact with the

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Embassy although they were part of the Embassy umbrella. Her husband had been attached originally to DAO in the Embassy and then had gone up to JUSMAG for two more years. She had already made a lot of contacts down in the Embassy, had her work down there, and then she was suddenly involved with the JUSMAG wives more. Anyway, I think she is probably doing more work in some respects than the head CLO would do because she has these areas that she is bringing in together. I think she has been very beneficial. She is a hard worker, she's a delightful person. I was really happy to hear that, and she and the new CLO get along like two peas in a pod. They're very opposite. The new CLO is established. She is an AID wife. Her husband has been with AID for many years, they have been to several posts. She had been instrumental in writing the CLO job description for the first CLO in Pakistan, I believe. She'd been there during the evacuation in Pakistan. She has a lot of background. She is a teacher, so she knows schools very well. She has two grown children. She is also a delightful person. She used to come in and just chat with me for hours, and discuss different odds and ends. Whereas the CLO assistant is younger, has a different lifestyle.

Q: A good balance.

SWANSON: It is a very good balance, and they like each other so well. So it worked out real well.

Q: Are you going to apply for a CLO when you go out again? You seemed to have enjoyed it.

SWANSON: You never know. Yes, I think I will. I think a lot of it is timing. Perhaps a post doesn't need a CLO, or not the kind of CLO that I am, maybe a post has a very good CLO already in place that will be there the whole time that I'm there. There are a lot of things I don't know, can't predict. If the opportunity arose, I would definitely apply.

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Q: Let me ask you, if someone has been a CLO at another post does it give them a little leg up on being appointed?

SWANSON: I'm not really sure it does. For example, the new CLO in my former job had not become the CLO in Pakistan. She had applied for it, but they left Pakistan right about the time they would have been making the decision, so she didn't know if she even had a shot at it. This (getting the CLO - Manila) was very exciting for her. She'd finally realized something she thought she'd really want to do. At our post were one, two, three other former CLOs and one of them could have applied for my job, but none did. One woman came in about the same time I did and could have applied for my job, but she decided not to. She'd kind of CLOed herself out. She had been the CLO in KL — Kuala Lumpur. She could have been very good. As it turned out, she'd come in and talk to me, and she was a nice resource because I'd say, "Well, this job is like this and this" and she'd say, "I know how that goes." There was like a little support group there. One of the other former CLOs at post had been one of the CLOs in Bangkok, I think. She didn't seem to have any interest in the job either, because she could have applied when I was leaving and she didn't. Neither one of them did.

Q: You said timing is much. I would think that someone who had been a former CLO and might have wanted the job, if someone has just moved into the position right after she gets to post and is obviously going to be there for a year, and maybe two years, I would think that she goes out and finds something else to do. She gets herself into a routine, then, when the CLO position unexpectedly comes up, she's not interested. You have to get someone who is really just off the plane or off the boat.

SWANSON: That's right, the timing is everything. And in these two instances I think you're right. Now, on the second CLO's situation, I think it was more ... she just wasn't interested in that particular job in the CLO. She didn't want to be that busy. She had a little girl she had adopted, she was focusing on her and she just wasn't quite ready, I don't think. She was also going to school in computers and learning about computers and just loving it. So

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I think that would have interrupted that. I think there were a couple of things, like you say, it was the timing. As it turned out, Sheila Platt had a personal assistant and this person applied and got that job. The former personal assistant left the same summer I did, and she'd been Sheila's saving grace. She helped her out a lot. Her name was Carolyn, she was great, and often when I couldn't reach Sheila, could always find Carolyn and find out what she was up to. I'd say, "Pencil me in. I want to talk to her on such and such a day." It was a really good system that they had set up. Carolyn had taken the job with Chris Bosworth, and then Sheila kept her on when she came on. It was a lovely job, it was a spouse job. It was a lot of fun for a good spouse that had the right attitude and the right whatever. The second CLO, as I mentioned, took that job when Carolyn left. I think that became the job that everybody wanted because Sheila was so delightful, everybody wanted to work for her.

Q: You just said something I thought was very interesting, that it was a job for a spouse with the right attitude. What was the right attitude?

SWANSON: That's a tough question. I guess the attitude is one where flexibility is everything, and understanding that the Ambassador's wife wears many hats and does many things. It is a job that on paper says you work 20 hours a week, but in person you may work more than that because you're working directly for a particular personality. There are some wives that are just not good at representational things, and that's basically what a good personal secretary would have to do. Very much doing what the Ambassador's wife would have to do, it is her shadow. I think it's a great job as far as PR, and as far as a resume is concerned because when you come back and say, "This is what I did," it opens a lot of really interesting people-oriented doors. There are a lot of companies that may say, "This is just what we need for our executive our CEO or whatever ..."

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

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Spouse: Wayne Steven Salisbury

Spouse Entered FS: April 1983 Left Service: N/A You Entered Service: Same Left Service:

Status: Spouse of FSO, former CLO

Posts: 1983-85 Brasilia, Brazil 1986-88 Manila, Philippines 1988-Washington, DC

Spouse's Position: Communicator, Econ/Com, etc., Consular, Economic,
Administrative Place/Date of Birth: Pullman, Washington; December 4, 1950

Maiden Name: Swanson

Parents:

Jay P. Swanson, Professor, Washington State University (Deceased)

Margaret Lybecker Swanson, Housewife

Date/Place of Marriage: May 28, 1977; Seattle, Washington

Children:

Stephen Tyler Swanson Salisbury, 6 # years

Carlin Lee Swanson Salisbury, 17 months

Schools: Pullman High School; University of Washington, BA, History

Profession: Program Assistant, University of Washington Hospital, Seattle; Housewife

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Volunteer and Paid Positions held: A. At Post - Paid: FLOAT, Secretary (PIT), Brasilia, 1 year; CLO, Manila, 18 months. Volunteer: Secretary, American Women's Club, Brasilia; Newsletter Editor, American Women's Club, Brasilia

B. In Washington, DC - Volunteer: Terraset Elementary PTO; Babysitter Co-op Chairman; Substitute Room Mother; Neighborhood Watch Block Captain

Honors: Meritorious Honor Award, AmEmbassy, Manila

End of interview